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ABSTRACT

Examined is a small, private liberal arts college at a moment of possible disorientation resulting from planned change and at a moment of major shift from its traditional role. Under new presidential leadership, the college has just undergone a comprehensive year-long evaluation and planning process designed to redefine its mission, evaluate its programs and practices, and then to plan its future course as it enters its second hundred years. Found are expected tensions in the trade-offs involved between efficient and effective management and democratic governance. The perception of all groups is that "efficient and effective management" overshadows "democratic governance" at the institution's present state of development. However, since the goal of efficient and effective management is also held higher than democratic governance by both students and faculty in the "Should Be" dimension, and democratic governance is seen as equal in importance to efficient and effective management by administrators, this is an indication that the institution may be accepting the demands of accountability, while at the same time seeking ways to improve the participation of all constituents in governance. (Author/KE)

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# COLLEGE GOALS AND GOVERNANCE: THE DEGREE OF CONGRUENCE OR DISAGREEMENT IN VALUE SYSTEMS AMONG FACULTY, STUDENTS, AND ADMINISTRATORS

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## Abstract

COLLEGE GOALS AND GOVERNANCE: THE DEGREE OF CONGRUENCE OR DISAGREEMENT IN VALUE SYSTEMS AMONG FACULTY, STUDENTS, AND ADMINISTRATORS

Those who control the funds for higher education are demanding that institutions clearly define their missions and demonstrate that outcomes produced through effective and efficient allocation of scarce resources are closely related to the stated goals.

The problem is that too few institutions have really considered what their goals are, and those that have often find that the various members of the college community disagree over what the purposes of the institution should be.

Not only does there seem to be a lack of clarity regarding goals but also a lack of agreement as to who should make the policy decisions. With mounting pressures in recent years from faculty and students to have greater participation in college governance, a counter pressure today is that of the demands of accountability in the use of financial resources.

This study looks at a small, private liberal arts college at a moment of possible disorientation resulting from planned change and at a moment of major shift from traditional role. The college, under new presidential leadership, has just undergone a comprehensive year long Evaluation and Planning Process designed to redefine its mission, evaluate its programs and practices, and then to plan its future course as it enters its second one hundred years.

COLLEGE GOALS AND GOVERNANCE: THE DEGREE OF CONGRUENCE OR DISAGREEMENT IN VALUE SYSTEMS AMONG FACULTY, STUDENTS, AND ADMINISTRATORS

Statement of the Problem

The financial difficulties of the institutions of higher education in the United States point up the need for out-come oriented approaches to planning. Indeed, those who control the funds for higher education are demanding that institutions clearly define their missions and demonstrate that outcomes produced through effective and efficient allocation of scarce resources are closely related to the stated goals. Therefore, a clearly focused statement of mission, based on the needs of constituents, should be agreed upon by those who control the educational processes of the institutions.

Any evaluation of an institution's effectiveness must be based on an institution's goals (and preferably goals which have been stated in terms of desired outcomes). The problem, according to Micek and Arney (1973), is that too few institutions have really considered what their goals are, and those that have often find that the various members of the college community disagree over what the purposes of the institution should be. Studies by Gross and Grambsch (1968), which surveyed faculty and administrators, reported marked differences between the perceived institutional goals and the instructional goals that would be preferred.

Not only does there seem to be a lack of clarity regarding goals but also a lack of agreement as to who should make the policy decision in higher education. With mounting pressures in recent years from faculty and students to have greater participation in college governance, a counter pressure today is that of the demands of accountability in the use of financial resources.

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent of agreement on institutional goals among faculty, students, and administrators at a small private liberal arts college. A related concern is the degree of congruence or disagreement among faculty, students, and administrators as to who should make policy decisions affecting the major goals of the College.

The College, under the leadership of a new president, has just undergone a comprehensive nine month long Evaluation and Planning Process designed to redefine its mission, evaluate its programs and practices, and then to plan its future course as it enters its second one hundred years. A major outcome of the Evaluation and Planning Process is a new Role and Character statement drafted by a task group, adopted by the various internal councils, and approved by the Board of Trustees.

Since this statement of Role and Character and the resulting New Plan imply major changes in direction for the institution, the extent to which goal attainment is actually possible depends upon the goals being consistent with student interests and needs and upon the degree of acceptance of the goals by both faculty and administrators as they undertake implementation of the New Plan.

Method of Procedure

Through use of the survey instrument prepared by Gross and Grambsch (1968) and modified for a Danforth study (1970), an analysis is made of the degree of congruence of inconsistency in the value systems of the various decision making groups in the College community. The questionnaire, entitled College Goals and Governance, has two major sections, one dealing with the importance of each goal of a particular college and the second dealing with who makes the big decisions. For the section on

goals, each respondent is asked to rate a particular goal both as to his perception of how important a goal actually is at the College and as to how important it should be at the College. During January, 1974, 24 faculty, 293 students, and 16 administrators at Arkansas College completed the questionnaire.

Descriptive techniques are used to compare data. Responses are clustered around a conceptual framework of Institutional Character and Educational Mission, and profiles are analyzed to speak to various dimensions of outputs and processes related to these concepts. Institutional Character is assumed to be formed from the scope and quality of its programs, esprit de corps, and its form of governance and management. The Educational Mission is defined as student outputs, teaching methodologies, and the educational environment.

Rank orderings of the most important and least important goals as seen by faculty, students, and administrators are also compared. The magnitude of discrepancies between "Should Be" and "Is" responses are examined, and differences between the means of selected responses are compared by t-tests for significance at the .05 level.

Special attention is given to analysis of items in the questionnaire which relate to changes in direction of the College as contained in the Role and Character statement drafted during the recent year long Evaluation and Planning Process. Degree of consensus regarding these goals is of interest not only because they represent recent stated shifts in direction but also because in some instances they represent radical departures from the traditional role of the liberal arts college. Thus it is possible to look at one institution at a moment of possible disorientation resulting from planned change and at a moment of major shift from traditional role.

Summary of Findings

Remarkable congruence is found in profiles of "Should Be" goals for faculty, students, and administrators. Apparently a year-long Evaluation and Planning Process has successfully focused the goals toward which the College should strive, and these goals have been agreed upon by faculty, students, and administrators. New directions and emphases set during the Evaluation and Planning Process including maximum intellectual and personal development of students openly admitted to the various programs of the College, career preparation, a closer relationship of service and cooperation with the local community, and innovation are confirmed as important goals for the College in its second century.

A similar congruence is found in perceptions of "Is" goals, with extremely close agreement between faculty, students, and administrators in the areas of student outputs and educational methodologies; close agreement on educational environment and scope and quality of programs; but some divergence of opinion regarding governance and institutional loyalty.

Students are found to be less able than administrators and faculty to distinguish among goals as to importance. Their responses show small range in opinion as to desirability among various "Is" and "Should Be" goals. The distance between the perceived reality of the "Is" goals and that of the desired "Should Be" goals is likewise uniform with only a few exceptions. Students perceive a wide disparity between the full round of student activities which they desire and the activities which exist. They are also dubious that costs are being kept down as low as they should be probably reflecting their concern over tuition costs in attending a private institution. They hold idealistic views of what

they hope to accomplish during their years in college, with career preparation and well-roundedness equally important as uppermost goals. They also hope to attain maximum intellectual development and to prepare for leadership positions in society.

Faculty are able to distinguish clearly between goals as to importance, and their perceptions of the disparity between what "Is" and what "Should Be" in certain areas is sharper than that of any other group. In working with students, faculty are most concerned that the educational experience assist students in the processes of value formation. They would also like to see the range of student activities increased. They hold idealistic hopes that the institution may keep up-to-date and responsive, and they want to see all programs developed to a level of quality that will justify college-wide loyalty and pride. They are most concerned about democratic governance, placing this above their own involvement in governance specifically, and about salaries reflecting the institution-wide contribution and service of individuals. They express some concern about job security, academic freedom, and career satisfaction. These concerns may mirror the nation-wide low ebb of faculty morale.

Administrative concerns are similar to those of faculty but are of a lesser degree over-all, probably reflecting the greater power of administrators to bring about change in directions which they perceive to be desirable. They share faculty concerns for assisting students in value formation, and they desire a broader range of student activities. They wish to increase the quality of programs and to foster institutional loyalty and pride, thereby providing the institution with a sense of independence and freedom from standards which might be imposed by outside

groups such as accrediting agencies. They recognize a need to develop a system for meritoriously rewarding those who make outstanding contribution to the institution as a whole. They feel that the best performance is in the important area of ensuring the continued confidence of donors, the one area which students feel is perhaps overemphasized.

For goals held uppermost by faculty, administrators rather than students came closer to holding these same views; and, more surprisingly, for goals held uppermost by students, it is administrators rather than faculty who share these views. Students have among their top ten goals two remarkably sophisticated responses: efficient and effective management of the College in number one position, and maximum intellectual development for students in ninth position.

The period of year-long introspection may have caused the institution to set quite idealistic goals, there having been found a greater degree of agreement between all groups on both "Is" and "Should Be" goals than in congruence regarding the present development of the College measured against the ideal institution according to perceptions of any group. "Management by Objectives" operational decisions can now be made to close the gap between the present state of development and the desired goals. Closing the gap may present a formidable task, however, when one considers that the discrepancies are statistically significant for top goals. Differences significant at the 1 percent level were found by t-test of means for the five goals agreed upon as most important by all constituencies.

Perceptions of the power structure of the institution were examined. With the greatest discrepancy between the perceived and ideal state of a goal held uppermost among all constituencies being "democratic participa-

tion in governance" an important consideration becomes, "Who makes the important decisions?" It was found that administrative influence is perceived to be most important i all areas of decision making. Even in educational policy making, the traditional forte of the faculty, the administrative influence prevail. Students feel their influence outweighs faculty influence only in the area of student affairs.

The President, the Board of Trustees, and the supporting church are seen as those in the highest levels of policy formation. Faculty and administrators feel that the president has greatest influence, while students perceive the trustees to be most influential. Faculty perceive students in a stronger position of influence than themselves! Donors and the federal government exert some influence reflecting the national trend of greater impact of external pressures.

Conclusions and Recommendations

It would be fallacious to assume that the particular profiles of "Is" and "Should Be" goals represent a microcosm of a larger universe, since by their nature private liberal arts institutions are the most diverse of any of the segments of higher education. However, by undertaking and by sharing the results of studies such as this, institutions can become more outcome oriented and some normative data formed against which comparisons can be made. Some institutions undertaking a similar goals study may want to sample the opinion of other groups such as trustees, alumni, and community leaders.

Expected tensions are found in the trade-offs involved between "efficient and effective management" and "democratic governance." The perception of all groups is that "efficient and effective management" overshadows "democratic governance" at the institution's present state

of development. However, since the goal of "efficient and effective management" is also held higher than "democratic governance" by both students and faculty in the "Should Be" dimension, and "democratic governance" is seen as equal in importance to "efficient and effective management" by administrators, this is an indication that the institution may be accepting the demands of accountability while at the same time seeking ways to improve the participation of all constituents in governance.

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